

II. REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

A. Summary of Amendments

The application now contains 18 claims.

Claim 1 has been cancelled from the present application.

Claims 25, 27, 28, 30, 31 and 34-37 remain cancelled.

Claims 2-8, 11-17 and 19-24, which were previously withdrawn from consideration, have now been cancelled from the present application. The Applicant reserves the right to pursue protection for these claims in a divisional or continuation application to be filed prior to the issuance of the present application.

Claims 32, 33 and 38-40 have been amended in order to incorporate the subject matter of their intervening claims.

Claims 9, 10, 18, 26 and 29 have been amended in order to change their claim dependencies.

New claims 41-48 contain the same subject matter as claims 9, 26 and 29 and have been added in order to add dependent claims to independent claims 33 and 38-40. No new matter has been added under the current amendment.

B. Allowable Subject Matter

On page 6 of the Office Action, the Examiner has indicated that claims 32, 33 and 38-40 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of their base claim and any intervening claims.

In accordance with the Examiner's suggestion, the Applicant respectfully submits that claims 32, 33 and 38-40 have been amended such that they are now in independent form, and include all the limitations of their intervening claims.

Accordingly, claims 32, 33 and 38-40 are now believed to be in condition for allowance.

C. Summary of Rejections and Reply

1) Rejection of claims 1, 9, 25 and 26 under 35 USC 103

On page 2 of the Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1, 9, 25 and 26 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,457,556 (hereinafter referred to as "Shiragaki") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,579,018 (hereinafter referred to as "Li et al.").

Firstly, the Applicant respectfully submits that claim 25 was cancelled in a previous office action response, and that as such the Examiner's rejection to this claim is moot.

Secondly, the Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1 has been cancelled from the present application in the current response, and that as such, the Examiner's rejection to this claim is also rendered moot.

Finally, claims 9 and 26 are now dependent upon independent claim 32, which for the reasons presented above is believed to be in condition for allowance. As such, the Applicant respectfully submits that dependent claims 9 and 26 are also believed to be in condition for allowance as being dependent on an allowable base claim.

2) Rejection of claims 10, 18, and 29 under 35 USC 103

On page 5 of the Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 10, 18 and 29 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shiragaki in view of Li et al. in further view of U.S. Patent No. 6,433,900 (hereinafter referred to as "Kuroyanagi").

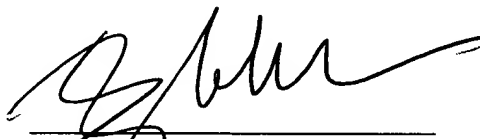
The Applicant respectfully submits that claims 10, 18 and 19 are now dependent on independent claims 38, 33 and 39 respectively, which for the reasons presented above are believed to be in condition for allowance. As such, the Applicant respectfully submits that dependent claims 10, 18 and 19 are also believed to be in condition for allowance as being dependent upon allowable base claims.

III. CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, all of claims 9, 10, 18, 26, 29, 32, 33 and 38-48 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration is requested. Early allowance of the application is earnestly solicited.

If the claims of the application are not considered to be in full condition for allowance, for any reason, the Applicants respectfully request the constructive assistance and suggestions of the Examiner in drafting one or more acceptable claims pursuant to MPEP 707.07(j) or in making constructive suggestions pursuant to MPEP 706.03 so that the application can be placed in allowable condition as soon as possible and without the need for further proceedings.

Respectfully submitted,



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